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Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 01951 071222Z
ACTION NEA-10

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S E C R E T BEIRUT 1951

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT ADDED)

FOR NEA/ARN DRAPER FROM GROSS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MORG LE
SUBJ: INTERIM TEAM REPORT

1. HAD HOPED TO BE ABLE TO TRANSMIT DEFINITIVE RESPONSE CONCERNING RECENT LAF ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT LIST BY THIS POINT. THOUGH TEAM HAS RECEIVED COMPREHENSIVE HEADQUARTER BRIEFINGS AND VISITED BOTH NEW BATTALIONS AT YARZE, IT STILL NOT CLEAR WHAT IMMEDIATE EQUIPMENT NEEEDS ARE NOR WHAT EFFECT 5,000 M-16S ET AL WOULD HAVE.

2. WHAT HAS BECOME CLEAR SO FAR IS HIGH LEVEL OF ESPRIT AND MOTIVATION OF JUNIOR OFFICERS AND, APPARENTLY, NEW SOLDIERS WE HAVE SEEN AND TALKED WITH TO DATE. WHAT IS ALSO CLEAR IS THAT NOT NEARLY ENOUGH EQUIPMENT IS ON HAND. TWO NEW BATTALIONS HAVE ONLY INDIVIDUAL WEAPONS AND 19 M-113 APC'S EACH. THEY ARE GOING THROUGH FAIRLY INTENSIVE DRIVER AND TACTICAL EXERCISES WITH APC'S, THE ON-VEHICLE .50 CAL.
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MACHINE GUNS AND THE M-16'S. DRILLS WE SAW, THOUGH OBVIOUSLY STAGED FOR OUR BENEFIT, WERE IMPRESSIVE IF RUDIMENTARY.

3. SOUTHWARD MOVEMENT STILL APPEARS VERY MUCH MOOT. CDR. OF CURRENT BEQAA BRIGADE, STAFFED TO BECOME LITANI BRIGADE, TOLD US PRIVATELY THAT HE HAS ABOUT

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1000 (NOT 3000) TROOPS READY TO GO SOUTH. THOUGH THIS STRENGTH PERHAPS SUFFICIENT TO ESTABLISH SYMBOLIC PRESENCE, IT CLEARLY TOO SMALL TO HAVE DESIRED IMPACT. EXPECT TO VISIT ABLAH SATURDAY WHERE WE WILL DELVE FURTHER INTO WHETHER SHORTCOMINGS IN THIS FORCE ARE MANPOWER OR MATERIAL-RELATED OR BOTH. IF CRUDE MANPOWER OR TRAINING PROBLEMS ARE DETERRENTS, SURELY ADDITIONAL RIFLES AND TENTAGE WILL NOT SPEED SOUTHWARD DEPLOYMENT. CONVERSELY, GROSS EQUIPMENT SHORTAGE WE PERCEIVE SO FAR MAY BE INSUFFICIENTLY ADDRESSED IN LIST BEFORE YOU NOW.

4. SOME TANGENTIAL THOUGHTS.

A. DURING LONG AND EARNEST PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH CHEF DU CABINET MILITAIRE ROGER AKL SEVERAL GOALS OF LAF CAME OUT WITH CRYSTAL CLARITY. FIRST, MILITARY FIRMLY COMMITTED TO STRONG, EVEN POWERFUL (RELATIVELY) ORGANIZATION. POINT MADE WAS THAT LEGITIMATE FORCES MUST HAVE MORE PUNCH THAN CONFESSIONAL MILITIAS IF ONLY TO ATTRACT RECRUITS WHO MIGHT OTHERWISE GRAVITATO TO LATTER. SECONDLY, AKL ET AL BELIEVE CONFRONTATION WITH PLO INEVITABLE, EVEN DESIRABLE. THOUGHT EPITOMIZED BY APHORISM: QUOTE ONE PALESTINIAN IN SEA IS JUST POLLUTION, ALL PALESTINIANS IN SEA IS THE SOLUTION UNQUOTE. LAF ITSELF INDICATED RECRUITING GOAL FOR NEXT 3 - 5 YEARS IS FORCE OF OVER 30,000;
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ONE SOURCE EVEN INDICATED THAT 60,000 NOT OUTLANDISH (TWO PER THOUSAND OF POPULATION). THIS CAME OUT IN COURSE OF OFFICIAL BRIEFINGS.

B. CONFESSIONAL INTEGRATION IS MORE THAN THEORETICAL GOAL. RECRUITS NOW BEING INTEGRATED ARE MIXED DOWN TO SQUAD LEVEL WITH NO REPORTED OR APPARENT PROBLEM. WHETHER THIS CAN BE DONE IN OLDER, ESTABLISHED UNITS NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR. LAF CONSCIOUSLY USING SPECTRE OF PLO OPPOSITON AS CEMENTING FORCE IN THIS RESPECT.

C. SAME HESITANCY REGARDING SOUTHWARD MOVE STEMS FROM CONCERN THAT IF BEST UNITS ARE SOUTH OF LITANI, SYRIANS PROVIDED FULL REIN TO ESTABLISH MORE LASTING PRESENCE IN CENTRAL LEBANON, EVEN BOX IN LAF FORCES BETWEEN PLO AND THEMSELVES.

5. IN LAST ANALYSIS, IT APPEARS PRELIMINARILY THAT CURRENT EQUIPMENT WANT LIST HAS NO OVERRIDING CONNECTION WITH SITUATION, NOR WILL FAVORABLE USG RESPONSE GREATLY INFLUENCE TIMETABLE FOR SOUTHWARD

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DEPLOYMENT. CONVERSELY, LAF CONFIDENCE IS CLOSELY TIED TO
ADEQUATE MATERIAL PICTURE. GIVEN THAT LIST CONTAINS
NO EXOTIC ITEMS, IT PERHAPS WORTHWHILE INTERIM, RESOLVE
BUILDING STEP TO RESPOND FAVORABLY TO REQUEST
EVEN BEFORE TEAM'S REPORT RENDERED.
PARKER

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